

INNER LONDON EDUCATION AUTHORITY



THE COUNTY HALL, LONDON, SE1 Telephone 01-928 5000

Education Officer Sir William Houghton

Replies to be addressed to the Education Officer quoting

EO/RS/L

Your ref. B.A-S/VWG

If you telephone please ask for extension 8766

11th August, 1969

Dear Brian,

Your letter and manuscript have been passed on to me. It is difficult to judge the work from one section and I assume a small section. As far as the educational material is concerned I have only a few points to make.

First, there is no discussion of (and only one reference to) the School Care Committee Work and particularly the various types of assistance (school uniform etc.) they can and do mobilise. This is of some importance given the points you quote on page 99. Are we to assume that none of the families either asked for or received this type of help? The impression I got from reading this part is that there is no help of this sort available - do you wish to give this impression (page 104 mentions help in relation to voluntary stayers on)?

The second point relates to free dinners on page 100: this seems to me to give both a brief and distorted picture. Of course children "could be made to feel" etc. But are they? You go on to say "as a result children" and then give one quotation: is this a typical one? Do all children receiving (or who ought to be receiving) free dinners make points like this?

A similar sweeping statement (and by implication denouncement) of the schools is made on page 105. "Children coming from such a background were not expected to do well", - in all cases, by all teachers, in all schools? It is followed by one example with a somewhat backhand comment on the headteacher. I would ask how often and is truancy a reasonable ground for transfer from a grammar school?

/As far as

Professor B. Abel-Smith
London School of Economics
Houghton Street
Aldwych
LONDON, W.C.2

As far as contacts between home and school are concerned the Authority would agree that the School Care Committee workers and School Inquiry Officers have a significant role to play - this is only marginally referred to for SIO and not at all for Care Committee Workers. Did none of the headteachers or teachers mention this work? And did none discuss the use of these workers as a means of informing schools about home circumstances?

Obviously it is not my place to comment upon the technical quality of the research. You already know my views about "proof by anecdote". But the material on educational progress etc. look pretty thin to me. Further, findings like 60% of mothers of children from large families expecting them to stay on after 15 find virtually no place in your discussion, but the 40% who say they will leave are discussed. I find the second sentence under table 62 disturbing (although it is capped by the opening sentence on page 106.....).

One final point - page 107 you say "many of these children's teachers' knowledge". How many? You do not give examples (save on 106) of teachers/headteachers with detailed and intimate knowledge of children's backgrounds. The sentence I am quoting is highly critical of the profession, can you substantiate it? Further, on page 108 the teaching profession is painted as the "bad guys". Are there no "good guys" in the profession?

Perhaps I am bending over backwards to defend the "system" - but it seems to me that the section I have read is written in a way that is doing exactly the opposite i.e. painting it as very black. I hope you have the evidence to support your position - because I do not feel it is presented in these pages, and we have some evidence that contradicts it.

Yours sincerely,



A. N. Little

